

The background of the cover is a painting. The upper half shows a vast landscape with a wide, flat valley in shades of brown and orange, leading up to a range of rugged mountains. Some of the mountain peaks are covered in snow. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. In the lower foreground, a man with a grey beard and hair is shown in profile, looking upwards towards the mountains. He is holding a pair of thin-framed glasses in his right hand. The overall style is painterly and evocative.

a JOURNEY

POEMS *by* NARENDRA MODI

TRANSLATED *by*
RAVI MANTHA

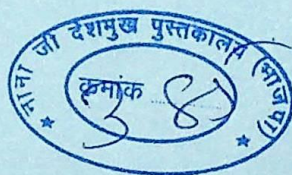
Devotion and dedication, love and longing, strength and vulnerability, all find expression in Narendra Modi's poetry. This English translation of verses originally written in Gujarati transports us into the poet's mind—his voice, his vision and his thoughts.

While the story of Modi's rise from humble beginnings to high political office is well documented, what is not well known is his journey in verse.

Now we know.



A4→R2





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RUPA

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Foreword

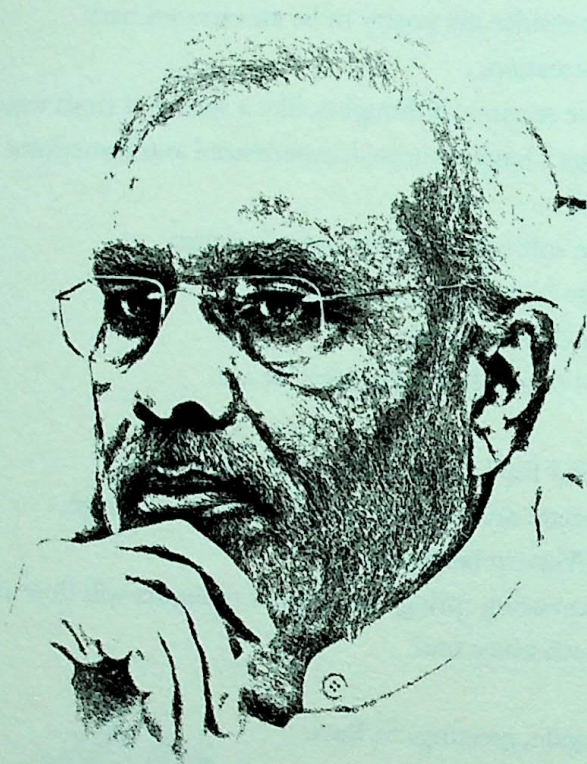
I don't consider my poetry to be an extraordinary literary creation,
These are streams of thoughts, like a spring of fresh water,
Of things I have witnessed, experienced and sometimes imagined.

May the soft sound of this spring's waters,
Resonate in your ears and mind,
And touch your heart!
It is this that will be a blessing for me.

My friend Ravi Mantha has made this effort,
To translate my thoughts in a vernacular language,
Into a Western language.
The outpouring spring of my inner thoughts will flow afar,
And reach every soul.

Once again, greetings to Ravi.

NARENDRA MODI
Gandhinagar
April 2014



Introduction

I have been an admirer of Shri Narendra Modi for many years, in particular of his grasp of the right path towards economic and social development of India, his devout Hindusim, his austere personal lifestyle and his sense of purpose and incorruptibility.

To me, no one better captures the hopes and aspirations of Indians. He embodies the possibility that even if you come from a modest background, you can rise to the highest levels of our nation's leadership through sheer achievement and determination.

Many people know Shri Modi through his considerable media presence, but the English-speaking urban populace of our country really do not understand who he is as a person. This is mainly because he is far more articulate and comfortable in Gujarati and Hindi than he is in English.

When I was given the opportunity to return to India after a long sojourn overseas, and contribute in a small way to the development debate taking place in our country, I leapt at

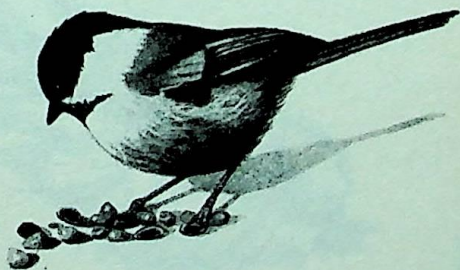
that chance. At the same time, fate presented me with the opportunity to translate Shri Modi's work from his native Gujarati into English.

This book is the story behind the story of Shri Modi's journey, told in verse in his own words, an allegory capturing his humble beginnings and his progress towards becoming the role model that he is today.

I hope this work truly captures Shri Modi's thoughts and feelings on nature, his devout Hindu faith, his patriotism and his love for his fellow men. There are poems that show an ascetic side to him, that of a spiritual seeker. At the end of the day, I simply wished to show the English-speaking world a side of his that is all too human, a facet not only of strength but also of vulnerability that we can all relate to.

The real challenge for me was emotional, because poetry is nothing but pure emotion. It took much more mental strength out of me than I had imagined any translation work would, but I am delighted with the result, and I fondly hope that you will be too.

Ravi Mantha
April 2014





Journey



In the recesses of my mind, I travel far into the past
And each face I see, unfolds a memory.
My recall comes with ease
Each visage easily recognized,
Nothing stays hidden.
For this is the truth, plain to see
That our companions, with whom we suffered
Never forgotten
Together endured
Those sufferings
They become the journey in the end.

Blessed are These Eyes

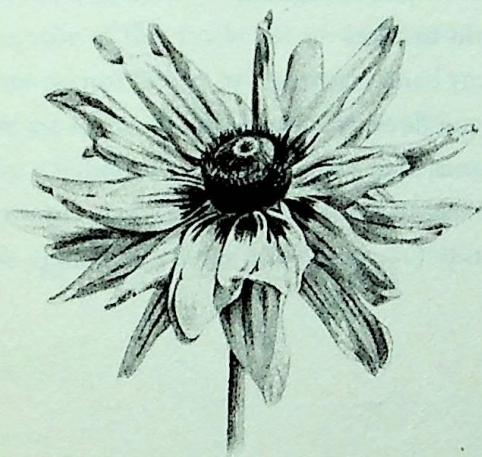
To gaze upon this golden earth,
Is a blessing granted to these eyes!
Sunlight spills on to this grass.
The green rays touch my eyes, but do not linger.

The radiant sky glows in blessing,
As it gazes upon this golden earth!
I see this rainbow, a floral bouquet
A vibrant ring of colour, high up in the sky!

The fruits of virtue from a long past birth,
Overwhelm my senses, as I gaze upward.
The ocean, too, is reborn in the sky.
Meanwhile, what tales do those clouds hide?

My heart's void is filled with joy
As I gaze upon this golden earth.
My love for my fellow men is matchless and true
Yet, only through others' eyes can I know myself.

No eyes can truly fathom,
That mystery, Existence.
Yet, my eyes are truly blessed
To gaze upon this golden earth.



Fleeting

On a black canvas of darkness
A lake forms beneath my brushstroke
A bumblebee appears above the waters
A tree's branch takes shape above the bee's hum.
I paint a moon, full in the sky.
The canvas glows in the pale light.
The sky lightens to a blue hue
The water is calm in the light of the moon.
I turn the moon into a fiery sun
Of Vaisakh, that fierce month of summer
The canvas burns, turns to ashes
My brush dries and my hand is frozen.
On a pyre, the faint sounds of a frog's scream
As the dreams of seasons fade away
My season of dreams too
Evaporates, into mist...

Bliss

My life's dearest companion, bliss
In this state, engulfed in love.
No one can separate us, or
Interrupt this regal sojourn together.
We soar high when we please
Or explore the ocean's cool depths.
We become the sun rising above the mountain top,
Or rise in silence in the starlight.
In bliss we show no shyness, no attention to form.
We are a caravan, an endless bounty of love.
The wise of this world perceive us as mad,
They do not lie; yet, we are true.
We are an ocean that leaps with energy,
Not a bubble, for we are one.
Formless, boundless, no coast nor edges
We appear like water mid-ocean, infinite.

Ode to Love

In the moment I became aware of you
In the serene Himalayan forest of my mind
A wildfire began, in raging earnest.

When I set eyes upon you
A full moon rose in my mind's eye
The smell of sandalwood, of a tree in full bloom.

And then at last when we met,
Every pore of my being was filled, with fragrance
beyond compare.

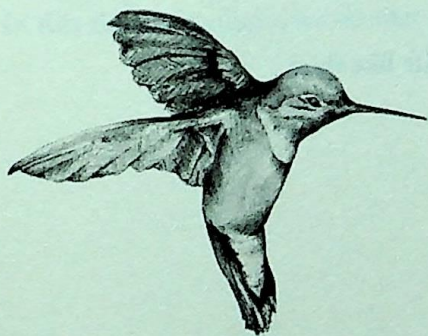
Our separation has melted the peaks of my joy.
The fragrance turned into searing heat
That burns my body, reduces my dreams to ashes.

The full moon sits on the far bank
Relentlessly cold, gazing at my plight.

Without your tender presence
On the ship of my life
No captain have I, no rudder.

Awakening

The old path of my life's journey came to an end
I saw at its end a tree this new morn.
Branches of air,
Flowers of light
Birdsong of abandon
Of leisure, imperfection, effortlessness.
I open all windows, outside and inside
To soak in Existence, never before so lovely.
My body, mind and heart
Engulfed by God's grace
And the whole world
Enveloped in my embrace.



Today

Was, is, past, present
Here, there, now, tomorrow
All this is emptiness,
A grand pillar, amidst ruins!

In the streets we wander in confusion,
Not even a zombie, a mere shadow of one.
The past as if
Soul stolen by the shadows of ghosts.
And though the soul is immortal,
We seek immortality in this body.

We yearn to become immortal tomorrow,
Clinging to the attachments of yesterday
And the betrayals of today.
Is there any meaning in a life like this?

We, Together

We, together

As dusk's footfall approaches, I wander alone, serene.

A feeling of energy, the roar of the Tarnetar fair, pulses
Through my being.

There is no exchange, give nor take, no mine, no yours.

This world and its bounty, together, ours!

I walk the path of the straight and narrow; no jostling crowds,
No tugging nor pushing

In this twilight, I wander alone, serene.

We do not divide, by creed or sect.

We are all human

We see the brightness of the flame, caring not whether lamp
or lantern

A dazzling beacon we employ to light our path ahead

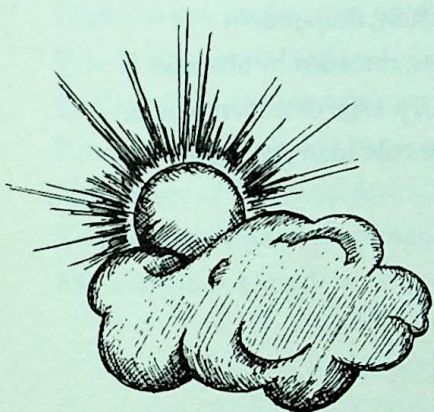
In this time of twilight, we wander together, serene.

Hope

Every ray of hope is like a solitary spade
Digging out darkness, one scoop at a time.
The quality of this spade lies in its lustre
It banishes darkness, a ray at a time.

Once the light touches the wheel of life
No boundaries remain as it spreads.
A flame of hope has burst forth today
Its white rings of coral dispersing light
To sear the darkness with its might.
The twin arrows of purpose and intellect
Once fired, know success as the only target.
Unshakeable resolve and steadfast righteousness
The twin armours of the bearer of progress.
The closed minds of selfishness and envy
Fallen by this light, overcome little by little.

The warrior for progress nurtures no likes or dislikes
Nor any concern for the adulation of crowds
With Lord Rama filling his heart
Full of forgiveness, he treads the path
And becomes that light of hope, that slayer of darkness.



Coldness

A heart of coldness is a malady like no other.
Out of breath, out of depth, a shallow curse for one another.
Even trees wither and die without love
And the cuckoo falls silent, on the bare branch.
Mindless violence, remorse and retribution follow
Out of breath, out of depth, coldness so shallow.
Bereft of love, crippled, melancholy, despondent
Each moment a pearl of sadness, threaded by absence.
Cutting one's tears with the sharp edge of a silent smile,
Out of breath, out of depth, the cold man gasps for love.

Calamity

The river, once graceful, a maiden in her first flush of youth
Is today a snarling lioness.

In spate, she lurches in insolence
Loses her inhibitions, pours out her anger
Sweeping away all in her path.

This river, when calm, a gentle life-giver,
Does she not see her own destructive power?
Whole villages washed away in her fervour
Bodies of the drowned floating downstream
Breaths expelled in one last scream
This power of Nature, a destructive reminder
To man who tries to shape her.
She has the last word.

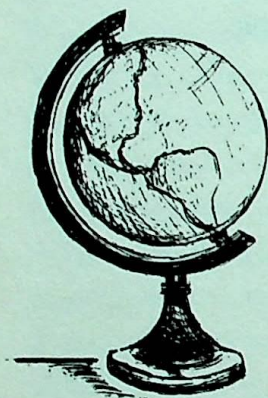
Awaken, O Brave One

As the cloak of slumber covers
The bodies, the mind wanders
At this hour, the brave arise
Sparkling with courage
The sky is fiery, full of flame
Shaped like a spear, it heads for the warrior
Who becomes a shield, a mirror of valour
The goddess of lust shrieks in the night
And the one who heeds her fails the test
But the warrior arises before her calling hour
For the brave are the ones who know best
When you hear the sound of Rukmini's cry
Run, not walk, to save Dwarka's honour
Time is always in motion, faster yet faster
Krishna's chakra in hand, surge further.
Not now the flute of Krishna's grace
At this hour, as the brave join battle
Talk becomes cheap, peace lies in tatters
The warrior is already on the way
To save the canvas of humanity
From the blot of harm's way.

To Wake, and to Shape our Destiny

These times are trying for Earth Mother
Today, all humanity mixes and blends into one
A time of great celebration
A victory for all, come let us cheer
The burial of enmities past
In a fragrance of understanding, of friendship
We awaken into this golden dawn
Living together, united as one
Cast off the loneliness of bitter fear
The Earth Mother takes on this challenge
Men tackle this unfamiliar distress,
With a yogic pose, a serene mind.
Today, the face of society is altered
Yet, when we peel the layer and look
We are made of the same essence inside
Mother Earth, bring your brood beside.
Wear your mother's love on your forehead
Sit not idly on a swinging cot
Come with us on this new path
The dreams of all line its shiny glow
And Mother Earth guides you as you grow

This is no way for the weak of foot or the faint of heart
This has always been the land of her brave, good sons
With a sky-piercing cry of triumph, we evoke
The fair grounds of Tarnetar, as Earth awakens.



One or Two Tears

One or two tears

The bonds of intimacy build, they are torn asunder
Leaving a tear or two behind, in the morose eye

The frozen tears are heavy, as if weighed down by stone,
A sitar sits in the corner, silent, with broken strings.
The breeze becomes hot, burns and the air stills
As one or two tears well up in the eye, to remain.

How long is the will to preserve pieces of broken glass?
There will not be longing, grief or lament.
One cannot draw patterns on a flowing stream,
As one or two tears well up in the eye, and remain.

Comforting companionship becomes searing loss
A path filled with flowers becomes a bed of thorns
The songbirds stay mute in this desolate forest.
As one or two tears well up in the eye, and remain.

Such People

Those who speak out of turn, yet remain silent when their
voices must be heard

Such people always remain, balanced on a blade of grass

We beseech them to raise their voice

And speak, where there is to tell.

Their empty show of baffling silence

Brands them like a hot iron.

One should never rest on the lap of flattery

Speak out of turn, or remain silent when the voice
must be heard.

To hear anyone's slander

And remain silent is a sin

For he who speaks the truth

All his transgressions are forgiven

In the wind, the tree swings without concern

Since time eternal, lies are alien to nature.

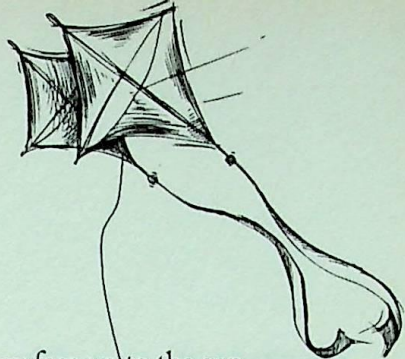
The Celebration

In this festival of kites, turning my face up to the sun
In my hands, I thread the kite's string
My feet planted on this earth, firmly.

And in the sky, astride my kite
I imagine a bird's-eye view of this jubilee
The sky is full of colour, a panoply.

My kite dances amongst the others, a festival of paper Holi
The treetops sing as the wind whistles,
No branches catch my kite, as it dances and twirls.

This kite is my own teacher, my Gayatri mantra
To all seekers it grants knowledge.
For once it escapes, its tether cut,
Everyone likes to chase it
No matter wealthy, brilliant or poor,
A release from all bonds, old and new, past and future.



This kite has the grace of the sky, and the wind's sense.
The kite that soared, even once, so high
Has the memory of experience, of that essence.

My journey towards the sun too
Is a kite's life, limited by a string.

O Lord Shiva, master of the universe
The kite's string is in my hands.
As my string is in yours.

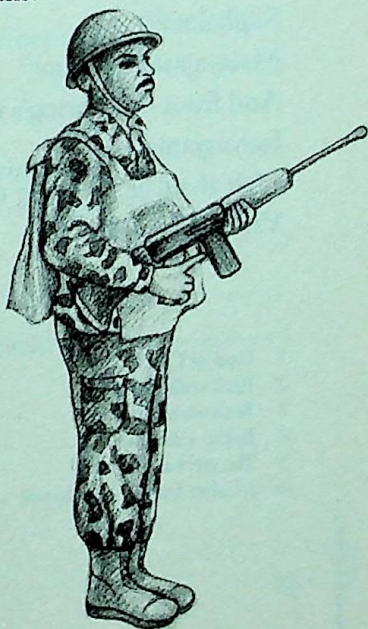
For the cause of every kite, the wind blows
For the cause of every being, Lord Shiva turns.
The kite dreams far higher than human ambition

Casting off its string, it flies into Lord Shiva's lap,
While we remain on this earth,
And spend our days untangling each other's knots.

Kargil

I remember the innocence of Kargil
In an earlier time, I had seen
Tiger Hill as just another peak
At that time
The great mountain king's white solitude
I had imbibed to my heart's desire.

But today
Each one of the snow-crowned peaks
Roar, with echoes of the bombs, the guns.
On this slate of ice,
Like hot and burning coals
I saw our soldiers, our men.
Here, every soldier
Was a farmer
Sowing his own seed today
And irrigating it with blood.
So that our tomorrow
Does not wilt.
I saw in the soldiers' eyes
Rising out of the mist
A hundred crore dreams



Their own eyelashes like strings
Holding the God of Death tightly
In their mind's eyes, I saw our brave men

I felt the presence of Yamraj^[1]
Prostrate, kissing the feet
Of our valiant.

The searing heat of their valour
Melts the ice, into a cool mountain spring
And in the spring's flow down the peaks
I heard the distinct notes of a tune.

Sujalam^[2]
Suphalam^[3]
Malayajasheethalam^[4]
And from that spring's womb
Sasyasyamalam^[5]
I felt the true meaning of the song,
Vande Mataram.^[6]

-
- 1 God of Death
 - 2 Rich with water
 - 3 Rich with fruits
 - 4 India's existence
 - 5 The eternal sprouting
 - 6 Mother India, I bow to you

Verb

I am a man of action
Even when I write,
I draw a circle of words
And then I make the circle a square.
In that circle which is now a square
I place words, colourful, smooth as marbles
These words of glass
Are words of truth—like tears
They form a period at the end of a sentence.

Near lie the adjectives, within the confines of a
Lakshman Rekha
They keep the piety of Ram
Adjacent to them the nouns keep playing
A game of tic-tac-toe.

I keep the verb in the centre,
And then I draw one endless circle, resolute.

Proudly Seeking the Truth

They say that liars are pecked by crows.
Must we speak the truth only to escape this fate?
Truth is our pride, we wear it on our sleeve
Not a yoke of compulsion to wear around our neck.

If we don't speak the truth
Society jeers like a booing cuckoo
And your fate is that of a dead fish
Struck repeatedly by a hungry bird's beak

News fed by rumours
Rise early in the morning like a black sun.

From truth up to our agitation for truth
In our journey we meet,
Walking in lockstep
With the rows of our fellow seekers,
Forming crowds of the righteous.

Song of a New Direction

How long will dust rising from the herd of cows foraging
Suffocate the evening sun's breath
How long will the sharp breadth of the sun's rays
Pierce the winter mornings?
How long will the afternoon sun
Melt the black tar road?
How long before you
Stop creating cracks in my already parched fields.
Please stop before these cracks
Draw blood from somebody's soft feet.

Let me sing the song
Of the cool rays reflecting off the copper pot
Of the woman fetching water.
I want to sing the song of the sun ray's reflection
That shines in the sweat droplets
Of the hard-working woman at noon's peak
Let me sing of the small particles of dust rising
Around the child
Walking with soft butter feet
Through the dusty trail of the cows.

I want to make an album, a picture book
Of those small, shimmering grains of dust.
I want to draw the picture of a new direction
And give it the shape of progress.

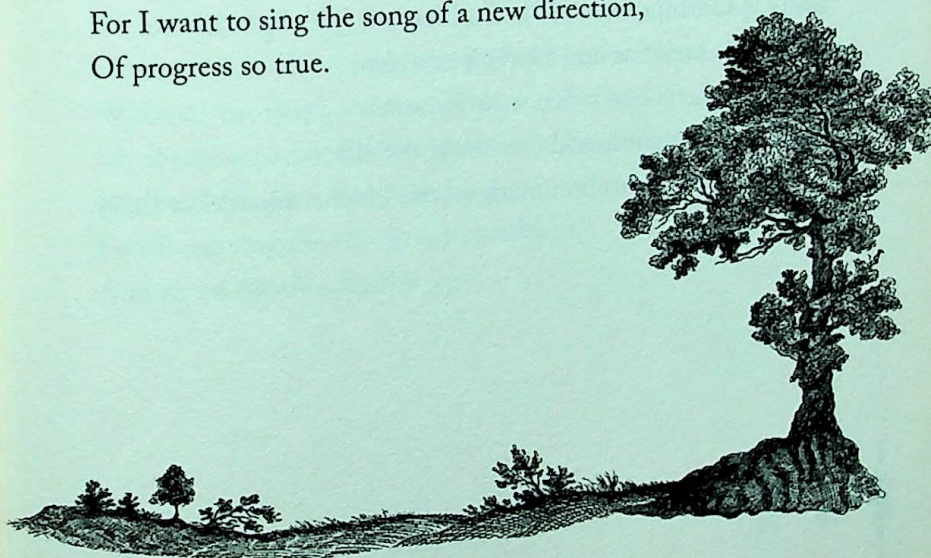
In that picture's colour and form
Today I see a stain.
Is this blot the ugly side effect of progress?
They are none other than the remains
Of the barren stalks
That we have grown and unfortunately cherished.

These small grains of dust risen
By those walking with soft butter feet
Are smeared by their blood
They stain the earth red.

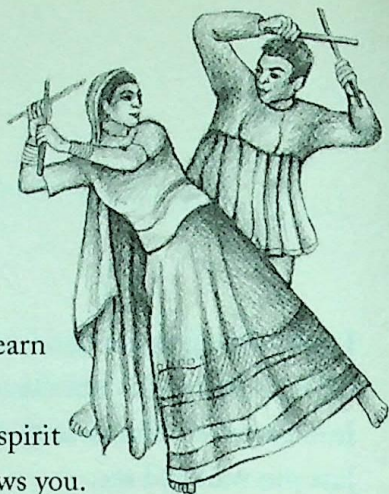
These are the marks of our motion, our progress so far.
Let us stop selling this stain as a norm.

I want to sing the song
Of mid-afternoon's hot sun.
Instilling the radiance in those very children
Just you wait and see.
In the album after this day there will be no stain
But alas, before this moment
The warm blood of so many children
Has infused these stalks, and flowed into this earth

This is why I beseech you,
Stop growing these unkind shoots
For I want to sing the song of a new direction,
Of progress so true.



Garbha, the Dance



To know our Gujarat, you must learn
The Garbha, the song, the dance.
Our greatest wealth, our deepest spirit
It moves you, it sways you, it knows you.
The sun, the moon, the seasons themselves are Garbha
Garbha is the day in dance, and the night in trance.
Our culture, our nature is all a show of Garbha,
The song of the flute, the touch of the peacock feather
Our intellect is Garbha, what brings us together in
agreement is its dance.
It is of the brave, it evokes the love of success
Body is Garbha and soul is Garbha, it is life's light leisure.
Garbha is sacrifice and Garbha is action,
It is a maiden's bed laden with flowers.
Garbha is the truth and Garbha is the all:
Garbha is the vermilion mark on the Mother Goddess's visage.

In the Song

In this song hidden in the bird's feathers
The cuckoo and nightingale also speak.
In one wing is Earth's soul
And in the other, the radiance of the sky.

On my paper I sketch a sun
And I draw a full-faced moon,
On my paper flowers a tree
And on this tree sprout very green leaves
I placed rocks for kinsmen's remembrance
As spring shakes the Earth with dampness.

On one side a desert and the other side a sea
While on the third, a river's script,
My throat is parched with thirst of the Supreme
Hard as I try, yet unquenched
I walk carrying the sky on my shoulders
And sit on Mother Earth's lap.

Bouquet of Roses

There is a deep, evil trench,
Hatred of man, for man made it.

I want to become a bridge
I come bearing the purpose of love.
Union of man in common cause
Is an astonishing, wonderful occasion

Rolling in a garbage heap bereft of meaning
Though a rose that grows there is never in vain.
Removing the weeds strewn over the pile of garbage
We discovered, a bouquet of roses.



Proud, as a Hindu

I feel proud as a human, as a Hindu.
When it wells up, I feel vast, an ocean

My faith is not at the expense of another's
It adds to the comfort of my fellow man.
Only that man's companionship I like
Who is filled with the warmth of devotion
Where the Narmada's water flows like lifeblood,
I am a dewdrop on a flower.
I feel proud as a human, as a Hindu.

Even though the eye looks small
Its capacity for sight is vast indeed
One religious sect is not my street
Diverse my school of learning
Innumerable suns, clouds, planets, galaxies, in my sky,
I am but a moon.
I feel proud as a human, as a Hindu.

Renunciation

Leave this body, leave this illusion
Leave these material things, step out of the shadows.
Break this fort, break out of this cage
Leave these soft dreams of comfort.

Wander this night, roam this earth
In the dark, chant, walk alone.
Leave this speech, leave these meanings
Break the barriers and move free.

Take no notice of fellow wanderers
Be they there or not.
Leave this striving, leave this struggle,
Cover yourself softly with the path of the lone.

In Lockstep

The Sun God is my favourite deity
He holds the reins of seven horses
Firmly in his hands.

They move in lockstep, across the sky
His whip at his side, unused, lies idly by.

And still the sun's mind
His movement and his direction
Sure of foot, safe as horses.
The chariot carries only his love.

In the Shade of God's Umbrella

On the path of success lies jealousy
On the path of failure we court mercy
Beyond the two lies the salvation I seek.

Cowardice, my sworn enemy
Misery does not know my company.
By living with the fullness of grace,
I yearn to welcome death's embrace.

In God's protective shade I learn constantly,
I am happy as a student.
On the path of success lies jealousy
On the path of failure we court mercy.

Here is the salty ocean of slander
There is the honey-sweet speech of praise,
Both are useless encampments
Both to be kept at bay.

I pray that on the battleground, my limbs do not tremble
On the path of success lies jealousy
On the path of failure we court mercy.

Comes the Spring

The end is the beginning; the beginning, the end.
In autumn's heart sings coming spring
Sixteen years of age, somewhere a cuckoo's tune,
The flaming orange Kesuda, the tree of love?
It looks poor, but its wealth is hidden.
In autumn's heart sings coming spring.

Today, the forest shone as if in a wedding,
Each tree adorned with lighted lamps.
To give blessings the saints are coming.
In autumn's heart sings coming spring.



Liar's Praise

If you call water stone
Or stone you say is water
You claim the cloud, a fold in the sky
You call a lotus babul
Makes no difference to any but you.

You can call rumour truth
And claim that day is night
You can call spring autumn
Slander the ocean, call it a desert
You can even call life, death.

This, your adultery of speech
You are welcome to its treats.
Nature is there to bear silent witness
Calm, detached and composed.

Beyond the Picture

The image you see is me, yet not
In that poster I am there, and not
This is not a paradox.

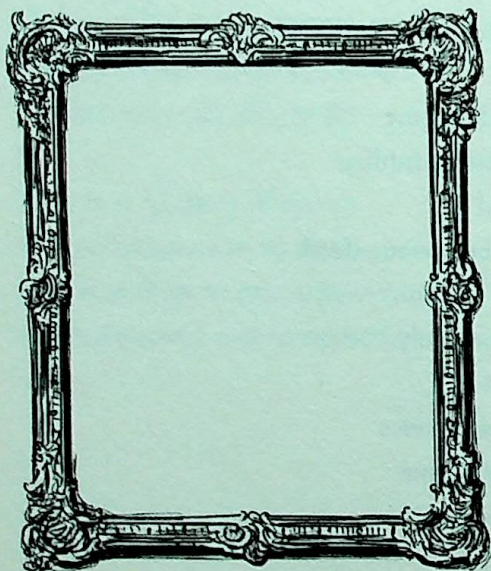
A picture is not like a soul
It gets wet with water
It burns with fire,
When it gets wet or burns
The image goes, but the man remains.

Make no effort to search for me
In the picture, an exercise in futility
I am sitting, legs crossed
Confident—in speech, behaviour, deed.

You know me by my work only
Work that is life's poem
Poetry has the discipline of verse
It may also have tune or rhyme.
In my cradle, Geeta's essence

My work adorns the picture frame
For your eyes,
Without reason moist
As you feel my chaste love.

Not in this image but in the fragrance
Of my labour's sweat you find me.
I rest in the cloak of a heap of plans
My voice a distant cry, now you see,
Your own reflection in my eyes.



View

In the garden, a forest actually
I sit under one tree.

This green grass swings in the wind
As butterflies flap their wings, too fast to see
The black bee in its own humming
Drinking from the essence of the flowers.

With these flying scenes
So easy on the eye
As evening falls
Inside my mind's eye, one tree opens fully
In the darkness blossom starlike flowers
Wearing butterfly's wings I float in the wind.
Like a glow-worm,
Taking with me small, minute brightness
One soulful song I sing
Taking the love of all
This green grass sways in the wind
In my forest garden.

Devotion

We see the body do its deeds, we feel the mind plan its needs
But the eternal path is Advaita, and my true Lord Sitaram.
The veena plays the melody wordlessly
And small minute notes arise
My heart beats with one single word, your holy name.
The mind plans its needs and the body does its deeds

From all my senses leap this birth's emotional tides.
See from my eyes, my world floats restless.
I fix my thoughts on Ayodhya; and in it the eternal Raghupati
Raghav Raja Ram
The mind plans its needs, and the body does its deeds.

River Narmada

Our Narmada, not a mere river
Revered by her children across the ages
A worship of her flow eternal.

I trace her path traces across a map of the landscape
On Gujarat's palm, she is the lifeline
The master of her people's destiny.

Her life-giving waters are pure
Those who treat her ill or poison her bosom
Let them be warned of the vengeance
Of the poet Kabir who guards her shore.

This Narmada has many illustrious sons
Gandhijis, Narmads and Munshis,
She is the glint in Sardar Patel's eye
She holds Gujarat's very identity.

She is the goddess of our clan
And the giver of boons,
I bow to you, Mother.

Strength

Fate is not a master to be obeyed
I am a man who relishes a challenge.
Not satisfied reflecting others' glory:
I am myself a burning lantern.
No reliance on other dazzling lights:
My own light is enough for me
To cut through the vortex of darkness
The bright lotus gives me energy.
I have no interest in the fog of obfuscation:
I am open and frank.

Fate is not a master to be obeyed
I am a man who relishes a challenge.
I will not accept a horoscope as truth
And to the distant planets my head will not bend,
When cowards design this life's rules,
I will refuse to play their silly game.
I have no other inheritors: I am my only heir.
Fate is not a master to be obeyed
I am a man who relishes a challenge.

Tomorrow's Challenge

Loud is the cry of the earth
Shrill are the screams of the sky
The right ways are forgotten paths
Challenging times for the likes of Lord Parth^[1]

Human beings sold in enclosures
Their humanity denuded, turned into demons,
Calls to fight, the clarion of mayhem
Riotous, they run through the streets.

Walls of ego stand
Behind them, a slaughter of dreams.
There is a challenge, there is a call.

Soothing words of equality remained just talk
Unity was crushed,
Constitution's door closed
Leaving behind a cesspit of vengeance.

Tears are plentiful

1 Arjun

And everywhere is darkness.
There is a challenge, there is a call.

Bodies hungry, minds broken
Man is angry with man.
The jeering crowd leaps as one
No thought, only action.
To break the walls
With eyes glowing like coal embers
There is a challenge, there is a call.

Search for dreams in ruins
For they give living meaning
Forgetting yesterday
Opening our hearts today,
Extending the horizons
We resolve to save the drowning ones.
Taking support of each other
Usher a bright new beginning.
There is a challenge, there is a call.

Butterfly

Alighting on the flower for a moment, the butterfly
drowns in a sea of colour.
Then takes flight,

On ponds of gentle fragrance nearby,
The butterfly skims across the surface.
A tender sun of happiness rises up
As the butterfly, work done, leaves the flower.

Amazing this life, its impermanence,
We come and go, our lives simply memories.
The bonds that bind, they don't break so easily.
As the butterfly drowns again, in a sea of colour.



Introduction to a Honeybee

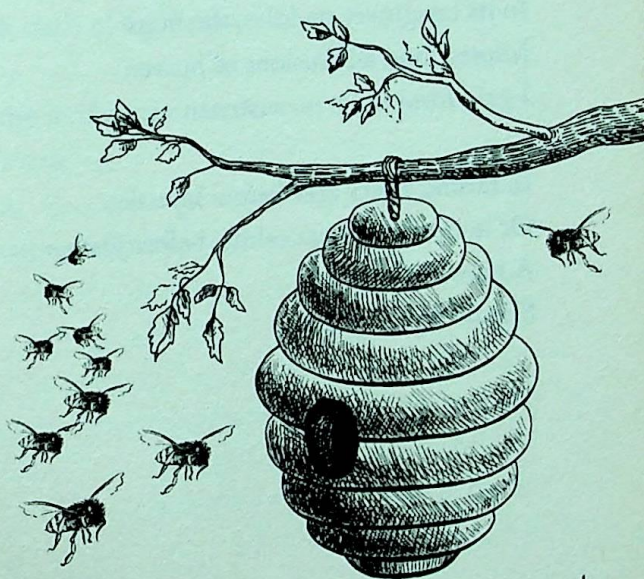
At times various, I seem like a honeybee
Even in the winter morning's sun: I glow inside with the heat
Of Vaishakh
Flitting like a bee here and there,
I sit everywhere, but remain nowhere.
Sitting near a flower for a while, and then
I enter its fragrance.
Carelessly free, floating in gusts of wind,
I seek the flower pink
At times various, I seem like a honeybee.

Where there is a garden there is melody too
And colourful drama unfolds on the lawns,
I will not walk on the beaten paths
Mine are different, random walks.

You see this fakir, poor and carefree: but of mind I am
A wealthy tree
At times various, I seem like a honeybee.

I trip on a stone and stumble
All this freedom comes with obstacles,
I build steps from these very stones,
To ascend high up the mountain.

My God above is forever: I am everyone's companion for free.
At times various, I feel like a honeybee.



On Transparency

The enigmatic silence of a new moon's night
Or the guilt-laden criminal's mute defiance
These I never believe in keeping.

Remaining transparent and flowing
Like water, this celebration is what I cherish

The water of a mirage and
In its imaginary puddles, the frogs'
Impressions, all illusions of heaven
I gain from them no sustenance.

In raising angry eyes before injustice
Or in bending them calmly before justice
A human being
Should feel no shame.

Awaiting a New Day

In the torrid sky, a stony sun arose.
This whole day akin to jute-cloth
Coarse and rough.
The dry air touched the trees
Implacable, merciless.

The afternoon coughed like a sick patient
And the evening fell with a feeling of helplessness
To roll in the black slush of darkness.

The whole night, the sunflower
Awaits tomorrow's sun.
A new morn when,
The sun rises, becoming a flower.

God's Grace

O Lord!

This world and my own true self

I can please or I cannot please.

But you, O Lord,

I will never displease.

By your grace, thorns become flowers

If I stand in the falling rain

Without shade or cover

You come near, as sunshine.

Seasons may come and go,

Gone only to come again

But in the season of my heart

You are eternal spring.

You give me so much

That there are days when there is only one question

To you, to me, to both of us.

What should I do to please you?

Or, what should I not do?

Effort

Time may come to lower my eyes, but my vision will
Remain unbending
I remain upright as a mountain, pure as the river.

My words are not decorated
My speech has its fount from the navel,
I love this land.
I sing a song enjoying the silence, and in its melody
The values of our land echo across many centuries.
Time may come to lower my eyes, but my vision will
Remain unbending.

Behind each and every action of mine
Are God's blessings,
One who doesn't set out to do wrong, never has any fears:
All debates and dialogues, they are simply within.
I act according to my promise: I will never be immoral.
Time may come to lower my eyes, but my vision will
Remain unbending.

Prayer

In every crowd, in each gathering
The kinsmen, the friends so beloved
I welcome with open arms,
Into a warm embrace.
Above the doorway to my humble abode,
I have carved, 'Truth is Welcome'.
Even when it is a strange bedfellow
Or imparts mere cold comfort.
More than the lie of a fragrant garden,
The stench of manure is the Truth I value
I find Truth everywhere I look,
Even from my detractors, I sift it with care.
The rumours and deception, I shake them off
With courtesy and good judgment
Life must not be led astray by false witness.

To obtain the truth that lies between two extremes
An ability that God gifted to me.
Each one's truth can be different
And it usually is.

I wish to remain cleaved to my truth
For Truth is like the sun for me
I pray each moment
That my life may become the Gayatri Mantra.



Love

This love of mine is like a chain of liquid
It cannot be tied, no matter how hard one tries.
If anyone makes a promise that I do not like.
Then in that relationship my heart does not thrive.
This love freezing like overnight dew
Can never be captured, only felt.

The sun's rays never form a fist,
And blowing winds are never caged.
This love that is like a cloud with many forms
Can never be captured, only felt.

Fog will come and fog will go.
The sun floats high above it with disdain.
Graceful like a swan is my love:
Formless, it cannot be strung into a pearl necklace.

Futile Endeavour

I strived to conquer the high mountains
My journey ended at a few rocks.
I tried to create a blooming garden
To be rewarded with a thorny thicket.

I wanted to ford the mighty river waters
And stood defeated in the foam, amidst the shallows.
The warming sun remained far from me
I could only reach the images of shadows.

I went to fall in love with the moon
But instead lost the entire sky.
I longed for a single wave of the mighty ocean
As I sat by the water's edge, and cried.

At Midnight

Midnight opens a portal to the heart,
For words to burst, like a cuckoo's song
But we stay mute,
As the walls echo this loneliness.

The darkest secrets of the mind, locked within,
Though they seek to spread and flow like water
A longing to pour out the heart.
But we stay mute,
As the walls echo this loneliness.

Only we know the anguish within,
Is there a companion to share
These emotions that build behind the padlocked door,
Frustrated, they ransack the mind.
But we stay mute,
As the walls echo this loneliness.

Mind's Eye, Third Eye

One morning a new eye opened in my mind, and with it a
wildfire
Lighting up every part of my body.
And in the midst of that desert I search within
For that fragrant garden.

I see happy people and sad ones too
I see the ill, I see those resplendent in luxury
The one who has left material things,
His body lies freed from illness.
An inner chord jingled,
And brought with it a melody.
I explained this to myself
It was my awakening.

I picked up the thorns
And spread thin a carpet of flowers.
On this parched earth have I
Sown a rainbow.
Searing through those beads of sweat
My fate bursts forth from my brow.

We Merge as One

The sea roars, and striving
Takes the sky in its arms
This is my inspiration,
My strength, my youthful energy!



At times, the sound of the sea is a clarinet
And at others, the beat of victory drums
At the far edge of the ocean, where it meets the clouds
I sometimes see a hill, and atop, a shrine.

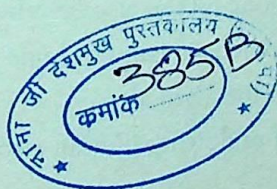
To submit to any coast or land
Is not the ocean's nature.
If we show the needed courage,
To gather in our palm its flowers of foam,
In which froth flows
The fragrance of the secret garden of the waves.
At the water's edge, the foam hides
The cry of the river, as it dies in the sea.
The river and the ocean become one
At last together, inseparable again.

The mountain taught me to stand tall.
And the ocean taught me to make waves

You can carve inscriptions on my solid form
Or cast me in a die when I melt into liquid

We hold the chisel of emotion in one hand
And the hammer of affection in the other
We pound the wall of distant horizons
And chisel the roof of the sky...

In this all-too-human sea
And bounty of a full green nature
Our home takes shape
And as our minds expand
We build the whole world, together.



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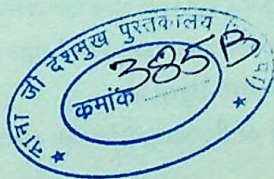
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Incantation

An autumn night, in the desert
Each grain of sand glistens, in a golden glow
The beauty of each moment
Feels forever, joined with eternity.

Life flows, each moment comes and goes
Flowing water drops
Glisten
Waves of wind
The scent of flowers
A burning lamp
The feeling of everything that happens;
But this life which comes, and then goes
Has no fixed abode, yet none ask why this is so.

Last eve life would have also paused
Those moments gone by can also be relived
In the coming moments a lamp of hope can be lit
Darkness can kiss this light also
And the moment of flowing life can also be stopped.

I lived life fully for some moments at least
Few, but they suffice.
I paused every once in a while,
On life's laboured walk.

Each breath carries a scent
In every speech there is love
The memory of that evening past

In my restrained tears there is yet hope of flowing
In my sleeping dreams, ahead is always a new morning.

In this routine, machine life
By merely pausing, I obtained
A new chant of beauty.



Mother, Give Me the Spirit

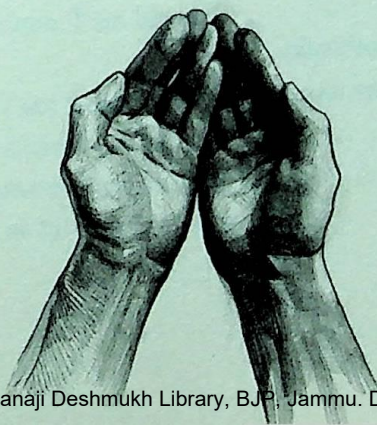
I beg of you, the giver of life
As I sit, hands folded, in my heart's closet
You bless me to stay free from evil
You give me spirit, you give me strength
You give me virtue
That keeps me on the true path
That is my only vow
To have your unconditional love
And be blessed by your grace.

I have renounced all attachment
To be detached, is my way
No garlands of flowers
Nor shades of fragrance
Though in your worship are varied colours
I am detached, yet I do not feel estranged
For the gift of calmness you gave to me,
Bless me with spirit, with inner strength

Mine is the way of the valiant
Your affection is infinite

In the ocean of my life, yours is the true feeling
In the ocean of my life, yours the lone ship
The ocean too cries some days
In anguish, yet I remain resolute
Bless me with spirit, with inner strength.

Park and garden may sometime dry
Flowers may wither on the vine
The gardener himself may shirk from his task
Then you sprinkle your tears
On defects, and close your eyes.
Braid a garland of flowers in such a way
It only manifests God's form.
Bless me with spirit, with this inner strength.



Attachment

My only attachment is to a blank canvas.
Look inside its heart, so white,
Where so many faces remain out of sight.

This unmarked canvas is a cloud's face
And when the cloud showers, grows very green grass,
Somewhere seen as trees and mountains
And eyes that feel the wind's breath.
No one is a stranger or foreigner
In silence also we like this nature.

Bees, butterflies and unknown birds
Build one cottage of leaves,
I lift this paper, and from it inhale
The scent of the first rain.

The white canvas is soft, silky.
I cover myself with her unseen shadows.

Let Them Meet in Fairs

Forming aimless crowds into fairs
Is my life's religion
My life's calling, its action!
In fairs man brings a friendly face
The meetings are fruitful,
A passing of time beautiful.

I am a man whose belief is 'can do'
I know not the word 'cannot'.
If any building is falling
I rush to hold it up in support.

Behind man is Lord Madhav
In front of him is Lord Raghav.
I have the flute of Krishna
And the bow of Shiva
Being human, I am blessed.

In earth I see heaven
My only claim on riches.
Let the unruly crowds move on
To meet as brothers, in fairs.

Secret

The trees, covered by night
Stand shrouded in a black veil; on these
I do not wish to set my eyes.

I wish to see trees
Standing in bright sunlight
Catching the full afternoon's sunshine
Blooming with flowers; fragrant with birds,
Lighting up my eyes.

The innocence of the morning's trees
The afternoon's trees' passion of youth
The wisdom of the evening's trees—
These I long to preserve in every vein.
Trees: my soul's succour
Asleep in the shade
Warm, an afternoon's breath
My shadow wraps itself in it
The wind's tender offering
Catching teardrops of rain.
Trees: mirrors of my existence, my character.
My secret.

Ramesh Parekh

To this moon festival, all have brought themselves,
Some have come with dreams, some with the empty
Darkness of night.

In full afternoon, night has risen, and blackness fills the eyes,
Without Ramesh this life of mine wastes away.
Time, once a noble friend, is now a fierce enemy,
And tears silently hindered.

To Ramesh's hand-writ musings I name the stars,
In memory of the lanes of Amreli, that village of poetry.
Those were the days, when we earned the scars.

With spectacles, though eyes vacant, I can see like Ramesh,
The words form by themselves, they become a poem.
His likeness, still in the frame, his gaze unwaveringly on me.

Towards the Goal

Eyes fixed on the goal
Forgetting self
Running and jumping
Sometimes
Shaking and trembling
On a blood-spattered road
Taking steps
And seeing dark red
Footprints
Spreading teary-eyed smiles
From my predecessors'
Bloodshed,
And sun rays reflected.
The bright sun's rays
Making my smile's redness
Fade in the haze
And at that time my sense of self
Would disappear
The goal seemed near
And my movements, suddenly quicker.

Vande Mataram

Vande Mataram...

Is not a mere song.

It is our honour,

Our wealth and grandeur,

This offering of freedom's greatest sacrifice,

This cry of our nation's worship,

This great incantation of the throbbing heart of the republic

This relentless pulse of progress

Remains our unbeaten identity...

This memory of 1857's floodlight,

For truth and its works'

Consecration in blood

An eternal flame.

Vande Mataram...

Is not a mere word,

It is our incantation,

Freedom's energy beat,

This is development's regal march,

A pledge to our nation's life-path,
Her people's morning breath
Their plea for enlightened consciousness
Vande Mataram...



Love so Strange

When the moon rises
Does not the ocean leap?
When the sun rises
Does not the sunflower smile?
Does the mighty river at journey's end
Ever refuse to meet the sea?
When the flower blooms
Does the humming bee ever fall silent?
When the bells toll
Can the temple keep its doors shut?
When the lamps in the courtyard are lit,
Does not the temple shine radiant?
To feel this wondrous, true love
So difficult and strange—why must it be?

Dawn of Wonder

The dark night of defeat has faded away
Victory's dawn has risen.
We celebrate the dawn today
And a brighter tomorrow
A massive wall of darkness has been broken.
And a brave new dawn has arisen.

Now let us all take the oath
Clamber aboard our brave and steadfast chariot
Catch everyone in self
Reject our own selfishness
Flower and fragrance are together delighted.
A brave dawn has arrived.

Now there is no story of sorrow or grief
No mourning, no more to torment
The storm has gone far away
And amid the sky's huge spread
Thorny crises forever banished
As dazzling hopes are born and set free.
A brave dawn; time for glee.

Zeal in the house of Mars on the chart
With the scent of dreams in each cell
We keep the faith of 'Ram' in our hearts
There is no occasion for melancholy.
A brave dawn, a time to be free.



Let Anguish Flow

Let the tears slide.
If a flower falls, let it lie,
Let it perish, forgotten in the dust.
Let anguish flow.

Dreams have been drowned
Without reason, submerged.
With tears sitting in the window of the eye, let them
Observe bird-like
Let anguish flow, let the tears slide.

The moment it overflows, hope gently smiles
On an unknown heartfelt emotion.
In my eyes' lakes the swans cruise
Let anguish flow, let the tears slide.

These dreams of happiness and sorrow,
Mirages of a faraway land,
I cover myself with the shadows of leaves
As overcast clouds shower you to their heart's content.
Let the anguish flow, let the tears slide.

Words

My words are strong as rocks
My flowing words, pebbles in the stream.
The stones and water, only when together do they speak
You and I bond well, yet
We are different in companionship
Waiting for us to dock together
Is infinity's shore.
I am the king of stories and you, the queen of fables.

One river and two banks
One side yours, the other mine.
Time wanders ceaselessly
As a nomad.
She knows our tales of woe, yet remains a stranger,
Unknown.

Timeless, the Season

Each day's assembly, in every hour's crowds
They gather in large numbers, those cameramen
Dazzling my eyes with torrential flashes of light
Enlarging my voice with this microphone
I am bemused at my Maker's grace.
I never cease to be perplexed
From what fount gushes forth this stream of words?

Sometimes in front of injustice
The tenor of my voice rises
And other times a river of words
Flows tranquil,
Sometimes words flow akin to the flowers of spring
To clothe themselves in meaning, unaided
A caravan of words keeps moving
And I gaze upon their journey, ever amazed.

In the midst of so many words
I save for myself solitude
And entering into that comforting womb of silence
Enjoy the bounty of the ancient seasons, alone.

Seeds of Dreams

I never fear to call a stone by its name,
I repeat the sound of water as water,

I am a man of naked reality.
I see the sky
To be infatuated by the rainbow.
But my home is built on stone
Never on a rainbow.

Of the colours of the rainbow
My dreams are made
Not romantic these dreams
They gather penance,
A whole life's worth.

You may have dreams, or you may not
But these seeds of dreams
That I sow in my land
I drench with sweat, and await
Their sprouting, become a banyan tree;
Then like some giant's arms

Branches spread
Birds build nests
And begin to reach the sky.
From their throats like rivers flow
The songs of God, and their eternal sounds ripple.



Contemplate Together

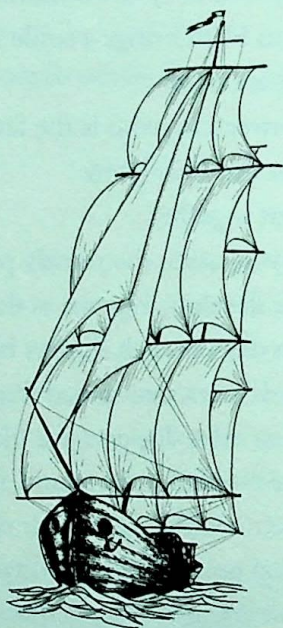
To the dawn, birthed from the womb of night, I say:
Come, sit near me
My love for you overflows
Your birth brings a smile to my countenance
I don't know
Between us, who is the father, who is the child?
But this I do know
That together
Laying aside the prickly pain of sharpened thorns
We develop, fragrant as flowers.
On day's branch flowers bloom
Birds' cries also spread fragrance.
Their cries disperse just like the flowers' scent
The smell and the sound, in motion, remain formless
Their coordination, their condition and their motion
Focal points of my meditation.
Come, you and I together
With this boon of contemplation
Strive to be that much
Let us live, filling our hearts with contentment.

Sea-Sailor

To possess a large heart
Full of spirit, full of life
These are the oars
The rudders of our life.
The stars in the sky
And the moon our beacons
The teachers of old in the sky
Our path-guides.

Cracks have formed in this ocean
Our countries, torn apart
What is known
To the seers in the sky,
Is that the ocean knows no walls
What Hindustan? What Pakistan?
Crossing a fractured border
This is each day's punishment.

Let someone pass, or do not pass
The rescuer may come, or cease to be one
But in this heart is patriotism
Like fire burning the ocean.



Resolve

There are days when I arise to
A fire-oozing sun,
A hot fiery day
And burn I do
In the fire-spitting sky
I search for a cool vessel
To bring down the rays' arrows
And pierce this labyrinth
Of shade and shadows
In the caravan of options
I find staunch resolve.

Resolve's light
Resolve's energy
Resolve's lyric
Resolve's company
Rising evening
Like a herd of cows' dust
Today there shines
An intellectual's halo
To rich men's fortunes
This head does not bow.
As helplessness is not in my blood.

Remembrance

Like hazy light, this faint recollection
Has gone to drink from darkness.
Darkness so dreadful
Darkness all-encompassing.

A leaf falls from the tree
As that recollection falls...
The loss of memories...means what?
And filling those gaps...how?
How much can be stored in memory's well?

In recollection oceans leap
Recollection is a hot summer's afternoon
With no nails but claws
Put out the lamps of recollection
Cut off its wings
Recollection cannot be pushed aside
So break off its eye.

Cut off its tongue
Though these lips cannot be stitched

Recollection gets giddy
Entangled in darkness
With recollection my throat is obstructed
My life picked apart.

Recollection has many colours and forms
It is both shade and sunshine.
Recollection has no footfall
Recollection has no sanctity.
What is sunrise to recollection?
Is there a sunset to recollection?

What is death to recollection?
Why must we surrender to recollection?
It has no covering of cloth.
No roof over its head
Recollection is a flowing stream
On this stream life is floating.

Chant of the Hindu

To be a Hindu, follow this chant
Repeat this single incantation
Indus Indus one song
This incantation is like a pearl
A circle of light in the darkness
We will spread light
Far and wide in this world
No bar dividing high and low
Dissolving our own body
With a smile to our fellow men
Singing songs of effort
Creating temples in the heart.
Let us spread light.
That no one is the enemy: we are all friends
This is our character.
Avoiding disagreements
Create new dialogue.
Let us spread light.
Food and clothing
Virtues and bounty
Will be easily available here

Very green will be the earth
And pleasant the star-filled sky
Unity, equality and affection
We will preserve by nurture
Let us spread light here.

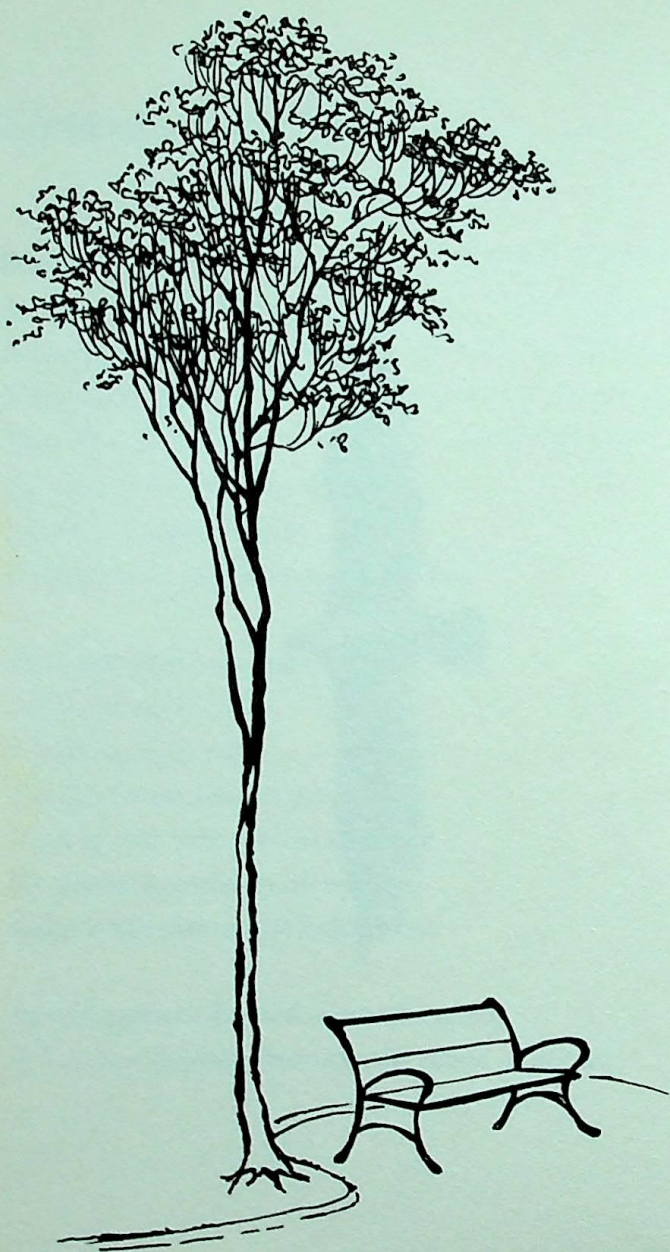
Eleventh Direction

Fearless of mind
A song endowed with tune
A healthy love bound by soul
A visionary smile
The very wind ecstatic
As water flows unhindered
The sky breathes fragrant
Each moment sacred, blessed with fire.

Earth bringing love, fragrant
And God my friend
I dwell on, each day
Not the future, not the past
Marked only with present moment
No practices, certainly no ways
Calm is the silence that holds sway

In this moment, beyond all ten directions
It is in the eleventh direction, the sound of music.





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Ravi Mantha is a lover of poetry,
a polymath and a public intellectual.
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change makers.



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The sea roars, and striving
Takes the sky in its arms
This is my inspiration,
My strength, my youthful energy!

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